

By Kelsey Volkmann, St. Louis Business Journal  
Tuesday, September 8, 2009

A St. Louis County business owner who has struggled to afford health insurance for herself, her family and her employees, will attend President Barack Obama's health-care address to Congress on Wednesday.

Michelle Barron, a Webster Groves resident and owner of The Book House, a Rock Hill bookstore, will be the guest of Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-Mo.

She said she was invited after writing many letters to elected officials about the trouble she has had with health-care coverage.

Barron said she provided health insurance for her employees for years, but doubling premiums forced her to drop it about seven years ago.

In more recent years, she struggled to find an insurance company that will provide her an affordable individual policy because of her high blood pressure and family history of breast cancer.

Her 24-year-old daughter has cerebral palsy and has to rely on Medicaid.

"There is a real need (for health-care reform), especially for people who are self-employed or have disabilities," Barron said. "There's just not an easy solution."

Barron, 45, has operated The Book House since 1986. The bookstore had revenue of \$200,000 in 2008.

"We have to do something," she said. "People shouldn't be making money off sick people. I hope (Obama) can convince people of the need to pass a health-care reform bill. Health care

should be a right, not a privilege, in this country."

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